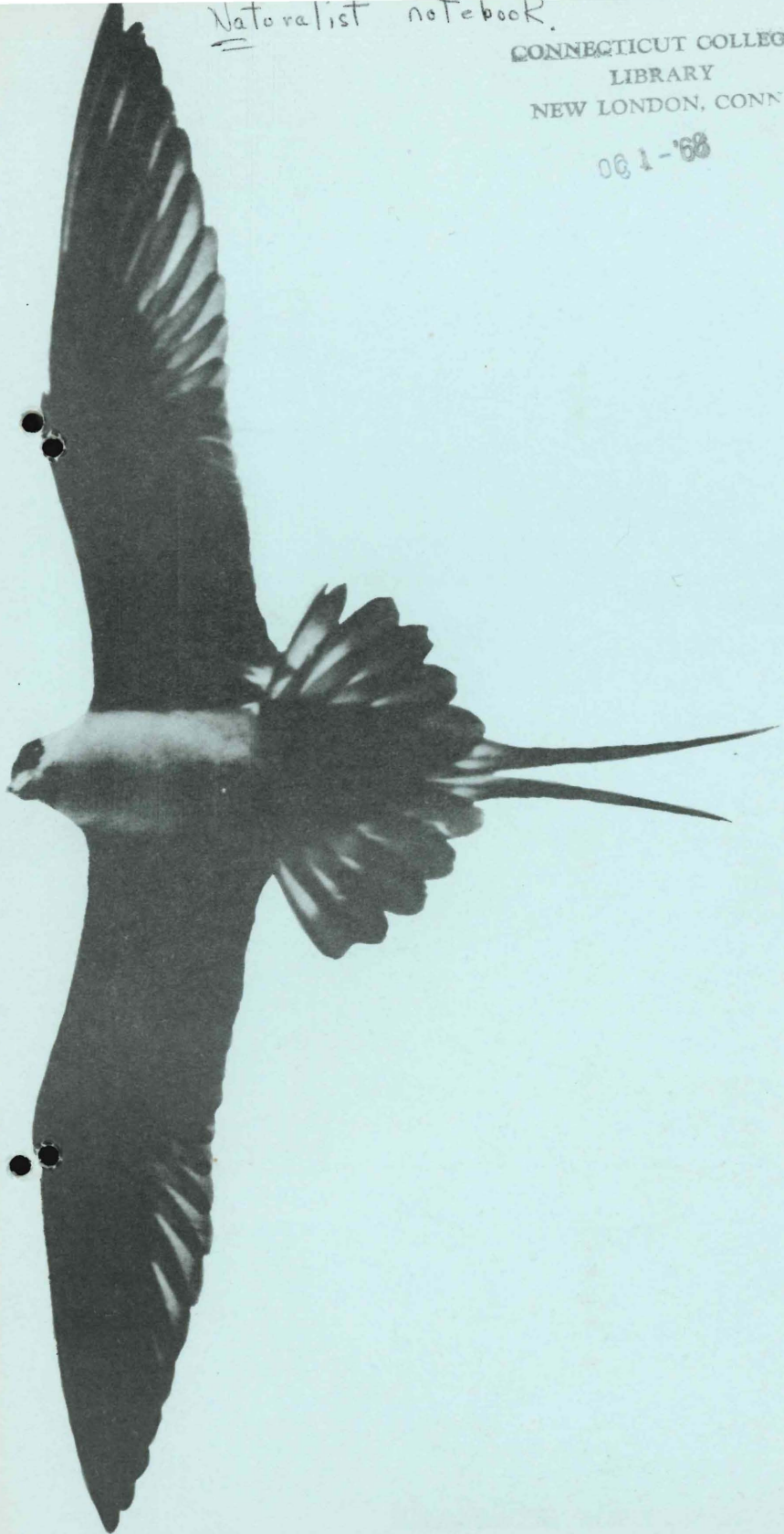


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NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

OCT. 1968

VOLUME III

NO. 10

CONTENTS

Front Cover: Long-Tailed jaeger by
Walter Berlet--Audubon Screen
Tour Lecturer for October

CHILDREN'S SECTION

Nature Calendar	1
Children's Corner	3
Pet Corner	5
Connecticut Creatures	6
Along The Shore	7
Rock Hounds	9

ADULT SECTION

Articles of Adult Interest	11
Your Own Family Jaunt	13
Field Notes	15

ACTIVITIES FOR OCTOBER

..... Inside back cover.

Published by the

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

622 Williams Street
New London, Connecticut 06320

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JOHN F. GARDNER--*Executive Director*
ROBERT C. DEWIRE--*Naturalist*
MICHAEL WALKER--*Curator*

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The Thames Science Center is a nonprofit organization seeking a quality environment through education.

The active support of children and adults in the Science Center, its programs, activities and efforts is earnestly solicited.

JOHN F. GARDNER
Editor

The Interpretive Museum of 622 Williams Street, New London, Connecticut 06320
The Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve At 200 River Road, Mystic, Connecticut 06355

OCTOBER'S NATURE CALENDAR

OCTOBER is the month of many endings. It is during this month that we see the last of many things that we have been used to all summer.

It is the end of insects for the year. A few dragonflies, bees and wasps remain during the month, but after a couple of hard frosts even these disappear.

It is the end of many of the birds we have seen all summer. The swallows, fly-catchers, tanagers, orioles and almost all the warblers have flown South leaving behind the more hardy birds that can live on seeds and berries.

It is the end of the reptiles and amphibians as the frogs, toads and salamanders, snakes and turtles all bury in the mud or under rocks and logs to spend the winter.

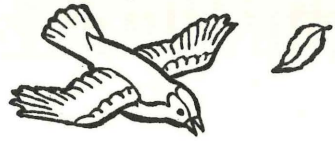
It is the end of ferns which have filled the woods all spring and summer. After a few frosty nights, a walk through the woods shows one that all the ferns have turned brown and shriveled up.

It is the end of wildflowers as the last remaining fields of yellow goldenrod turn brown.

It may seem sad to see everything disappear for the long winter season, but all this would be taken for granted if it were present all year long. This way you have a greater appreciation for all these things when they return in the spring.



OCTOBER'S NATURE CALENDAR



October is the month of fall colors and migrating waterfowl.

October 1... The Myrtle Warbler--our winter resident warbler arrives.

October 3... Both Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets arrive from the North.

October 5... The last terns leave our beaches until next year.

October 6... Full Harvest Moon--a total eclipse takes place starting at 4:55 A. M. The total phase is at 6:10, but the moon will have set here in the East by this time.

October 8... Ripened Dogwood berries attract 90 species of birds that feed on them.

October 10... Fall foliage reaches a peak the next few days.

October 13... Gray Squirrels become their usual nuisance at bird feeders.

October 15... Red and Brown Dragonflies are among the last of insects remaining.

October 18... Songbird and shorebird migrations both come to an end.

October 21... Many dabbling ducks--Pintail, Green-winged Teal and Shoveler pass through here on migration.

October 26... Birds' nests you walked by all summer without seeing now become exposed as leaves fall off.

October 28... Bufflehead ducks arrive for the winter in coves and rivers.

October 30... The first Snow Buntings of the season can be found on sandy beaches.

THE CHILDREN'S CORNER *by TRUDY GARDNER*

WHY DO LEAVES CHANGE THEIR COLOR?

The Leaves are changing into brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red making the Peace Sanctuary a place of beauty.

It looks like an artist took his paint brush from one tree to another to change the leaves from the green they were all spring and summer.

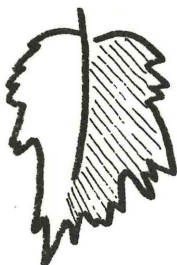
The reason the leaves change color is due to a chemical process which takes place in the tree getting it ready for the cold winter.

All spring and summer the leaves were like factories making food so that the tree could grow. This food making takes place in many tiny cells in the leaf and is carried on by small green bodies which give the leaf its color.

In the fall the cool weather causes a slowing down of the factory. The work of the leaves is finished. The machinery of the leaf factory is taken apart you might say; the green chlorophyll is broken up into many substances and whatever food there is left over is sent to the body or trunk of the tree to be stored for use in spring.

So the yellows, reds and orange colors you now see in the leaves were there all the time; but hidden under the green bodies. Then in late fall when the weather becomes even colder, other cells of the leaves die until finally the leaves fall to the ground.





Trees would not be able to live through the winter if they didn't go through this change, because winter temperatures would freeze the water in the veins of the leaves.

Also, by shedding their leaves, trees can more easily bear the winter's snow and ice.



Why not take a walk today and see the trees in their fall colors in your favorite woods?

**Why not invite a friend
or neighbor to become
a member of the center?**

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PET CORNER

by *DAVE RICHARDS*

SWORDTAILS

The fish to be discussed this month, the Sword-tail, is a member of the Poeciliids family. This family of fish, among which are the Mollies, Platies, Guppies and Swordtails, are live-bearers. (This means that their young are born alive; not laid as eggs.)

The Swordtails originally came from Guatemala and Mexico. There are many different varieties and color patterns to be found, as they breed often and in large numbers. Many hobbyists enjoy cross-breeding them to get the certain colors and patterns they want.

The male only has the long tail (or caudal) fin. The female has no extension in the fin and closely resembles a female Platy or Molly. In nature, they are usually green with a red stripe down the side of the body. As mentioned before, however, they have been bred to various colors.

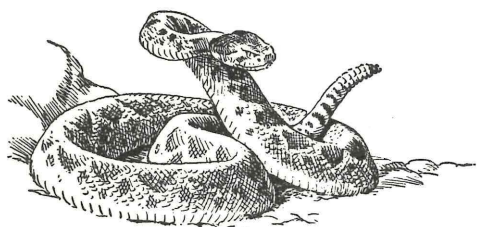
The swordtails are excellent community fish as they have very placid natures. They require a temperature of about 74° F. When breeding, the parents should be removed from the young as soon as possible to prevent them from eating their offspring.

CONNECTICUT CREATURES

by MIKE WALKER

This is the first in a series of monthly columns that will appear in the Naturalist's Notebook. This page will be devoted to exploring little known aspects of some of the animals of Connecticut's woodlands, fields and marshes. When possible, an attempt will be made to coordinate what we discuss here with an exhibit in the Museum on Williams Street. We are in the process of expanding the Museum's live animal displays with a definite goal in mind. We believe that the preservation of living things in their natural environment is vitally important, not just for the so-called Nature Lover, but for the well being of all people. Our basic purpose in displaying representative animals in the museum and discussing their characteristics here is to broaden understanding of the Natural World and intensify efforts to preserve it.

Finally, this page is not meant to be my private forum. The curiosities and wonders of Nature have interested and perplexed many of us at one time or another. We invite you to join us with questions and suggestions as we begin to poke, probe and puzzle over Connecticut Creatures.



(Next Month-"Connecticut's Two Poisonous Reptiles-Monsters or Marvels?")

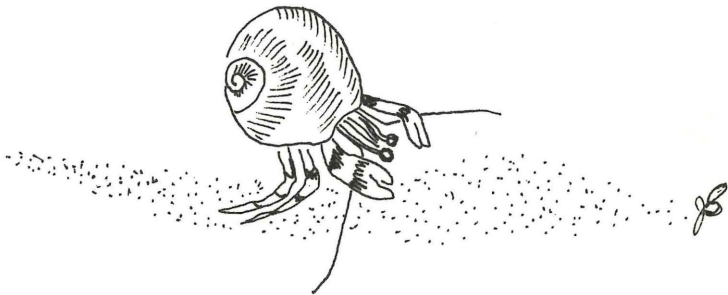
ALONG THE SHORE

by BARBARA KASHANSKI

The Hermit Crab

A trip to the beach during the month of October can be a wonderful adventure. Many of the little water animals that stay hidden during the crowded summer months are easier to find and watch. One of the most interesting and amusing little creatures is the Hermit crab. This crab can be found in tide pools and shallow water all along our beaches.

The Hermit crab belongs to a group of animals called Crustaceans. In Latin, Crusta means crust, and the animals in this group have a hard outer covering or "crust". Relatives of the Hermit crab are lobsters and shrimp. The Hermit crab is built a little differently from his cousins. Only the front part of his body has a hard cover. The back part (abdomen) is soft, and to protect this soft part the little crab backs into an empty snail shell which becomes his home. As he grows, the Hermit crab has to keep changing his house to a larger size. Small Hermit crabs use shells of our most common sea snail, the periwinkles. Large Hermit crabs move into whelk and moon snail shells. The soft hind part is curved so that it fits well into the shell.



The little hermit moves himself and his borrowed home around by using two pairs of walking legs and his two large claws. The claws are also used to catch and break up its food which is either dead or live small sea animals.

The Hermit crab begins life in the spring as an egg that clings to the mother's body inside the shell where it is safe. It then hatches into a larva that looks something like a little shrimp and spends its time swimming, eating and growing. Next the little crab changes his looks until he appears more like a tiny crawfish. The last change in shape is after the coat is shed (molts), and the curved abdomen grows. It is at this stage the Hermit crab has to find a small empty shell to protect his soft hind body.

Take a trip to the beach this month and see if you can find this little animal. Pick him up-- he'll hide deep in his house at first--but if you hold him very still he will soon pop out to see what is going on. When he does, you will see how much he looks like his cousin the lobster. Don't forget to put him back where you found him so that the next time you or another boy or girl visit that area the little Hermit crab will still be there scurrying along in his borrowed house.

ROCK HOUNDS

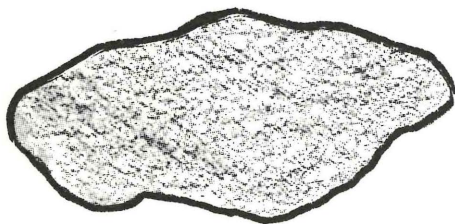
by JERRY THEILER

SEDIMENTARY ROCK

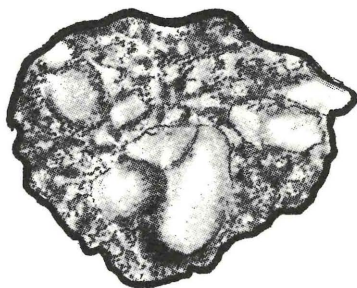
Most sedimentary rocks have flat even layers because they were deposited under water. It is very easy to confuse sedimentary rocks with some of the metamorphic rocks, so we have to try to figure out what material forms the rock to separate the two kinds.

Try to "key out" some of the common sedimentary rocks using this chart:

<u>Parent Material</u>	<u>Squeezed into</u>
Gravel & Rock —————>	conglomerate
Sand —————>	Sandstone
Mud —————>	Shale
Plant Matter (peat) —————>	Bituminous Coal



Sandstone



Conglomerate

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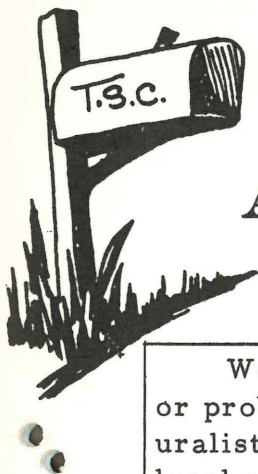
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ARTICLES OF ADULT INTEREST

We welcome notice of Conservation activities or problems for inclusion in this section of the Naturalist's Notebook.... Please let us know of your local activity so that others may be aware of your efforts and lend their support where possible....

ESTUARIES... The American Littoral Society has begun a Save the Estuaries campaign which will cover the Atlantic coast from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico. The Society plans to take an inventory of estuarine resources, act as a watchdog against operations threatening these resources, and conduct a program of conservation education. These estuarine areas are where 65 per cent of the fish population either breeds or spends its juvenile period of growth. The Society hopes that a balance can be maintained between the legitimate human needs for space on the coastline and the wild-life needs for the same area.

BIRD FEEDING... With White-throated Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos down from the North, Tree Sparrows and, hopefully, Evening Grosbeaks on the way, and numerous Titmice, Chickadees and Cardinals around, it's a good idea to get your feeding station into full operation. The Science Center has a large supply of top quality mixed and sunflower seeds and a variety of bird feeders on hand. Why not purchase your seed and feeders from us? We need your support...

SELF-DESTROYING BEER BOTTLE... A beer bottle which disintegrates when thrown away has been made by Rigello Pak AB, Stockholm, Sweden. The container is made of rigid polyvinyl chloride, Saran, and a paper sleeve lined with thin aluminum foil and plastic glue. It weighs one-tenth of its glass counterpart, but can withstand the pressures of storage and transport. The plastic is decomposed by sunlight and acids in the soil. The bottle can also be burned to ashes. It will be on the market this year.

THE SCIENCE CENTER'S NEW EMPLOYEE...

The Board of Directors of the Thames Science Center are pleased to announce that a new member has joined the Center's professional staff. Mr. Michael Walker of Mystic will be Curator of the Interpretive Museum at 622 Williams Street, and will assist in conducting classes and field trips for local school children.

One of Mr. Walker's first projects is an expansion of the museums's live animal exhibits, and remodeling is presently underway to accomodate the change.

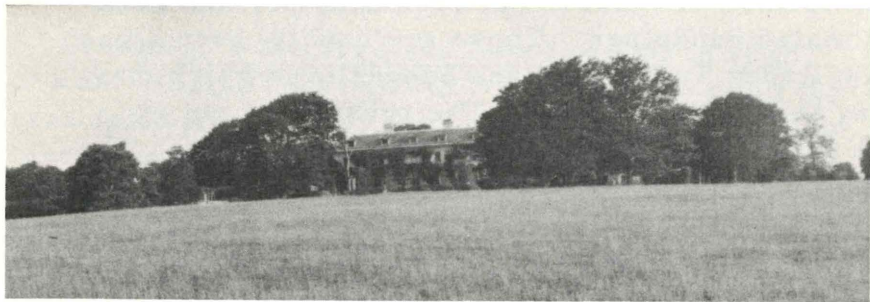
A former teacher in this area, Walker comes to the Center after instructing a sixth grade class at the Juliet W. Long School in Ledyard for two years.

Mr. Walker is a graduate of Blair Academy and the College of William and Mary. He and his wife Joan live on Mason's Island in Mystic.

We invite you to stop in the Science Center Museum and say hello to Mike...

YOUR OWN FAMILY JAUNT

by BOB DEWIRE



HARKNESS PARK

In October, Harkness State Park is a good place to see many animals for the last time before winter arrives. Some of the things we may find are described here.

In the fields, Woodchucks will still be about and will be noticeably fat as they stuff themselves with food for the long winter sleep ahead. Monarch Butterflies still fly around the fields, but in decreasing numbers as the month progresses. Barn and Tree Swallows pass by flying South, catching the few insects remaining over the field.

The inlet also holds a few things for the last time this year. Very often a Common Egret will remain into October, still stabbing at fish in the inlet. A few Laughing Gulls are still present on the mud flat, but they have lost the black on their heads and are much drabber looking. Greater Yellowlegs will still be around the muddy areas also. Several birds are present this month that will remain in the inlet all winter--when it isn't frozen. These include the Baldpate Duck which arrived the end of September and Buffleheads and Red-breasted Mergansers which will arrive this month.

Out on the beach, several shorebirds remain early in the month. These include the Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Spotted Sandpiper and Semipalmated Sandpiper. These are usually seen along with Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderlings which may stay through the winter. The rocky area out at the point is the best place to find these birds. The Black-bellied Plovers are often up on the lawn. Water Pipits, small sparrow-like birds with constantly wagging tails, are found around the rocks on the beach.

Offshore, one or two Common Terns may still be seen early in the month, but soon disappear. New arrivals for the winter include the Common Loon and Horned Grebe.

The brushy thickets along the beach and around the garden areas hold many kinds of birds during this month. Yellowthroats, Myrtle and Palm Warblers are all present and such birds as the Hermit Thrush and Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets pass through at this time. Perhaps the most interesting group to see at this time are the sparrows which fill the brushy areas. There are often dozens of White-throated Sparrows and Juncos. Song Sparrows are common and near the rocks at the point, the Savannah Sparrow is a regular inhabitant. Swamp Sparrows are in smaller numbers and this is the best month to find the uncommon but very pretty White-crowned Sparrow.

During October, take a trip, or perhaps two to Harkness Park--one early in the month and one late. See how many of the things in this article you are able to locate.

FIELD NOTES

August 15 - September 15

Franklin, Waterford and New London: A flight of RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES was noted in the area from August 31st thru early September. Single birds and pairs were reported from the Arboretum, Mitchell's Woods, Mary Butler Drive, Magonk Point, The Strand and Barn Island. The first northern migrant warblers arrived a little early with a BLACK-BURNIAN WARBLER at Great Neck Road on August 15, a PARULA WARBLER at Magonk Point on the 20th and a WARBLING VIREO there on the 22nd. Warblers became more noticeable at the end of August with REDSTARTS, HOODED, PRAIRIE, CHESTNUT-SIDED and large numbers of BLUE-WINGED WARBLERS all moving through. A BAY-BREASTED WARBLER was at the Science Center on August 28th and a MAGNOLIA WARBLER was at Magonk Point on the 31st. BLACKPOLL WARBLERS arrived in the area on Sept. 4th. On August 28th 12 plants of the GIANT LOBELIA were found in Franklin--the first ones found east of the Conn. River since one was found in Oxford in 1910. Photographs were taken.

At Harkness Park NIGHTHAWKS were migrating south in good numbers from the 26th on. A LOG-GERHEAD SHRIKE was seen there on the 21st and a BONAPARTE'S GULL was on the mudflat in the inlet on the 31st. A PALM WARBLER was in the garden area on Sept. 4th. A BLACK TERN was flying offshore at Magonk Point on Aug. 21st.

Ledyard, Mystic and Stonington: IRONWEED flowered along River Road on Aug. 20th. At Barn Island, PURPLE GERADIA, MARSH FLEABANE and SALT MARSH ASTER were all in flower on

Aug. 27. A BROAD-WINGED HAWK was circling over the Peace Sanctuary on Aug. 28th. A WORM-EATING WARBLER was at Shewville Road on Sept. 1st. NIGHTHAWKS were first seen on Aug. 21st at Stonington. At Barn Island a migrating flock of EASTERN KINGBIRDS numbering about 30 birds was seen at the State Boat Landing on Aug. 26th. On the 31st a STILT SANDPIPER was seen there. Twenty-three CANADA GEESE were in the salt marsh at Barn Island on August 31st and large numbers of BLACK DUCKS and BLUE-WINGED TEAL are in the third pond.

Rhode Island Shoreline: STARFISH by the hundreds have washed up along parts of the beach at Napatree Point. Eight WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS were at the point on Aug. 29th along with 5 KNOTS. At Quonochontaug there were 17 COMMON EGRETS and 6 SNOWY EGRETS in the salt marsh on Sept. 1st. At Point Judith on the first there were several ROSEATE TERNS at the lighthouse and a flock of about 1,500 TREE SWALLOWS were along the wires and roofs of houses.

Contributors to this column were: Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Lawrence Brooks, Robert and Mary Jean Dewire, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Eastman, John Gardner, Rick Holloway, Walter Moran, and Russell Waldo.

ACTIVITIES FOR OCTOBER

- Oct. 12.... 8:00 A.M. Rocky Neck State Park
Shorebirds and Waterfowl
- Oct. 12.... Special exhibit of three reptiles who
have borne their young in captivity
during the last few weeks. These will
be the Banded Water Snake and Copper-
head of Connecticut and the Sidewinder
of the southwestern United States.
- Oct. 13.... 2:00 P.M. Lantern Hill Fall Colors
and Fall Migrants
- Oct. 19.... 8:00 A.M. Harkness State Park
Waterfowl and Last of Flowers
- Oct. 20.... 3:00 P.M. Audubon Wildlife Films/
NORTHWEST TO ALASKA by Walter
H. Berlet. Clarke Center.
- Oct. 27.... 2:00 P.M. Napatree Point
Birding and Beachcombing

***Also Note Nov. 3, 2:00 P.M. -- Family Film
Festival-- Lyman Allyn Museum-- Films will
be Creatures of the Sea and Walt Disney's
Seal Island.

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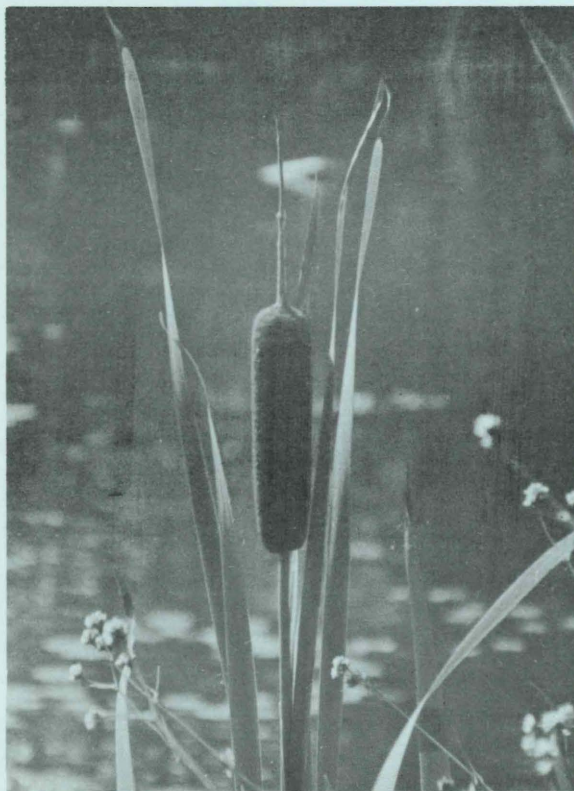
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